

# Marine Turtle Newsletter

## **38th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology & Conservation - "Beyond Protection of the Sea Turtle," 18-23 February 2018 in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan**

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The Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation, held every year by the International Sea Turtle Society (ISTS), is a unique event that draws participants from around the world, from across disciplines and from various cultures, all with a common interest: sea turtle biology and conservation. The Symposium has developed a unique society and strong traditions over the past 37 years, with venues shifting annually. This year the meeting is migrating to East Asia for the first time and will be held in Kobe, Japan from 18 - 23 February 2018.

The city of Kobe, which borders the Bay of Osaka, is a port town that was the former capital of Japan during the end of the 12th Century, and it is now a modern and bustling metropolitan center. Kobe is known for its Nada Sake breweries, which produce 30% of the nation's sake, for its exquisite Kobe beef, and for the famous Arima hot springs. Aside from these attractions, Kobe is one of key sites for sea turtle conservation in Japan and thus makes it an ideal location to get together to discuss and innovate ways to research and conserve sea turtles. Kobe is also home to the Suma Aqualife Park aquarium, which is a major contributor to conservation efforts in the region and has already committed to providing financial support to the Symposium. The aquarium has developed sea turtle excluder devices to reduce the incidental capture of sea turtles in fishing activities, while also designing artificial flippers for injured sea turtles. In conjunction with the West Japan Railway Company, the aquarium also installed wildlife road crossings (ecoducts) in the area by placing u-shaped tunnels beneath the railroad tracks, with a specific focus on ensuring the safe passage for a large numbers of freshwater turtles that cross the tracks daily. The Kobe Airport Island has an artificial lagoon pond that is used by local conservationists to rehabilitate injured sea turtles. These and other projects enhance sea turtle conservation awareness and education to the public in Kobe and throughout Japan. With such features, Kobe is an ideal venue to celebrate the upcoming Symposium.

The theme of the Kobe Symposium is "Beyond Protection of the Sea Turtle." As a result of decades of hard work, we have witnessed the protection and recovery of some sea turtle populations, while at the same time facing a myriad of threats and issues to others. As researchers and conservationists, it is easy to get so caught up in the day-to-day activities of our work, that we lose sight of our mission and goals. It is important to step back, envision our goals and discuss them with colleagues, and take our efforts "beyond protection."

Urashima Taro is the protagonist of this year's Symposium and is featured on the meeting's logo, representing both Japanese culture and demonstrating this nation's appreciation of sea turtles. Urashima Taro is a Japanese fairy tale where a fisherman rescues a turtle and is rewarded with a visit to a palace under the sea. Everyone has a version of Urashima Taro inside of them, urging them to protect, understand and discover the mysteries of the sea turtles, with no personal expectations other than the intrinsic joy of knowing that sea turtles and their habitats are protected.

The primary days (20-23 February) of the Symposium will feature numerous oral sessions, including three special themes sessions: "Beyond Protection of the Sea Turtle," "North Pacific Loggerhead Turtle," and "Linkage of Space and Sea Turtle." Additionally, there will be keynote presentations given by prestigious invited speakers. Hundreds of poster

presentations will also be displayed throughout the meeting, and special 'Meet the Authors' sessions will be held, during which attendants can directly engage with poster authors.

We expect to have approximately 300 Japanese participants and >350 overseas participants from more than 75 countries. The Symposium, as well as multi-day pre-meetings consisting of various workshops and regional conferences, will be held at the Kobe International Conference Center. Three lodging options are available near the venue: Portopia Hotel, Ariston Hotel, and Pearl City Hotel. A welcome social will be held on Monday February 19th at the Suma Aqualife Park, while a farewell banquet and party will be held at Portopia Hotel on Friday February 23rd to close the Symposium.

The Symposium venue and hotels are located in front of mono-railroad station, which connects Kobe Airport (UKB, 8 min) and downtown Kobe (10 min). Overseas participants flying into Osaka-Kansai (KIX) can take a shuttle-boat (30 min) to get to UKB, or take a bus to downtown Kobe (65 min). Other options for overseas participants is to fly into Tokyo-Narita (NRT) or Tokyo-Haneda (HND) and there connect with another flight to 1) UKB, 2) KIX or 3) Osaka-Itami (ITM). From ITM, it takes 40 min by bus to get to downtown Kobe. Kyoto is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Japan and it is easy for participants to access Kyoto from downtown Kobe by train (1 hour, \$6).

The official ISTS website (<<http://www.internationalseaturtlesociety.org>>) will go live and registration will open on September 15th. The deadline for early registration, abstract submission and travel grant requests will be 15 October 2017. The website shall contain all the vital information about registration, costs, hotel and other general information regarding the Symposium, as well as information on Kobe and Japan. Mark your calendars, practice using chopsticks, begin learning the Japanese language, and start planning your trip to Kobe, Japan, for the 38th Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation!

